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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/13/2026

TAGS: PREL MARR UNSC PGOV APEC EAGR IR JA

SUBJECT: THE AMBASSADOR'S SEPTEMBER 19 LUNCH WITH VICE FOREIGN MINISTER YACHI

Classified By: Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer. Reason: 1.4 (b)(d).

¶11. (C) Summary: During a September 19 lunch, the Ambassador and Vice Foreign Minister Yachi stated that Shinzo Abe is likely to establish a council similar to the U.S. National Security Council and will seek to reinterpret collective self-defense to better assist the United States in missile defense and maritime security, Yachi said. UNESCO Secretary-General Kusiro Matsuura may decide to run for UN

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Secretary General, he confided. Yachi asked that Japan be

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included in future multilateral talks on Iran. On bilateral issues, the Ambassador asked Japan to extend its participation in Operation Enduring Freedom and called Yachi's attention to the looming problem over genetically modified rice flour in imported U.S. processed foods. End summary.

¶12. (C) Over lunch with the Ambassador on September 19, Vice Foreign Minister Shotaro Yachi discussed a range of bilateral and multilateral topics in light of Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe's elevation to Prime Minister. Prime Minister Koizumi's cabinet is expected to resign the morning of September 26; the new prime minister will immediately be elected by the Diet and announce his cabinet that same day, so there will be no leadership gap. Some top leadership positions, including the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan (LDP) secretary-general post, are likely to be decided on September 25, according to press reports, Yachi noted. Foreign Minister Taro Aso might stay in his current post or be appointed LDP secretary-general, Yachi speculated, depending in part on his showing in the LDP presidential election. Yachi had strongly recommended that Aso attend the UNGA meeting in New York from September 21-24 but Aso will probably stay in Japan to tend to political obligations as the new cabinet is formed. However, Yachi said he could not rule out the possibility that Aso might reconsider a September 21-23 visit to New York.

¶13. (C) The new Japanese prime minister hoped to meet the President at the APEC Summit for lunch on November 18 or 19, Yachi reported. The Ambassador said we wished for the first meeting to be very special and to look different from an

ordinary bilateral meeting. Yachi said he had heard from the National Security Council (NSC) that Mrs. Bush would also be attending and he emphasized that, if elected, Abe could bring his wife. In contrast to Koizumi, who is single, Mrs. Abe will likely play an active role as wife of the prime minister. (Note: Yachi remarked that Mrs. Abe has been very involved in the abduction issue and is a big fan of Korean movies.)

Abe's Vision for Japan

¶4. (C) When Abe becomes prime minister, he would like to form an organization under the Kantei that resembles the U.S. National Security Council (NSC), Yachi stated. This new organization would include five assistants, chosen from among politicians, to advise the prime minister. Yachi said he would like to learn more about the NSC while in the United States, and its relationship with the intelligence community.

¶5. (C) Yachi said that as prime minister, Abe would like to reinterpret the constitution, but only to allow the right of collective self-defense in order to better assist the United States on missile defense and sea-lane security. It will not be necessary to revise the constitution to do this, he explained. Under the current interpretation, Japan cannot legally shoot down a missile targeting the United States, or assist a U.S. naval vessel that comes under attack, but Abe wants to change that. North American Bureau Director General Chikao Kawai, who accompanied Yachi, reiterated Japan's interest in working closely with the United States to develop an effective ballistic missile defense system.

US-Japan-Australia Strategic Dialogue

¶6. (C) Turning to the U.S.-Japan-Australia Strategic Dialogue meeting, scheduled for October 20 in New York, Yachi

said that Japan would like to discuss North Korea, intelligence sharing, humanitarian and natural disaster concerns, the fight against terrorism, Afghanistan and Central Asia. Yachi raised the possibility of holding a separate four-country strategic dialogue to include India. He said he knew it was not possible to add India to the trilateral dialogue but said he would like to find an alternative format. Another possibility would be to hold a meeting at the foreign-minister level during the Asian Regional Forum meeting. That said, India was apparently skeptical about how to hold a four-country strategic dialogue without appearing to be "encircling" China, Yachi said.

United Nations Issues

¶7. (C) Japan was still waiting for a response from the USG on UNSC reform, Yachi observed. Turning to the upcoming election of a new UN Secretary General, Yachi said UNESCO Secretary-General Kishiro Matsuura may decide to run for the

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spot at the last minute, if no promising candidates emerge. Matsuura, however, does not want his name coming up early, so will put his name forward just two weeks before the election.

Japan would appreciate it if the United States supports his candidacy, Yachi said. Yachi also asked the United States to consider Japanese candidate Nobuo Tanaka for the Executive Director position at the International Energy Agency (IEA). Tanaka is the current director for science, technology, and industry at the OECD, he reminded. Yachi also urged U.S. support for Dr. Shigeru Omi as the new WHO Director-General.

Bilateral Issue

¶8. (C) Yachi noted that Japanese working-level officials were moving forward on implementing USFJ transformation, but

that Okinawa's November gubernatorial election could complicate things. On economic issues, Japan would be willing to hold a low-key sub-cabinet meeting before APEC, if needed to coordinate our approaches to this year's meeting, particularly with regard to regional architecture. However, energy issues and more general meetings should be addressed after APEC so the new cabinet members can participate. If two meetings must be held, the meeting after APEC should be highlighted, he suggested.

¶9. (C) The law enabling Japan to participate in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) is set to expire in November and the Democratic Party of Japan will oppose its extension, Yachi said. The government faces time constraints in trying to renew it. The Ambassador emphasized that it is very important for Japan to continue to participate in the war on terror. Since Japan is no longer involved in humanitarian activities in Iraq, Japan's new prime minister could face criticism if Japan does not renew the law. Yachi replied that Japan would like the United States to provide information on how valuable Japan's contribution has been to OEF in order to counter domestic criticism that the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force is merely a floating gas station in the Indian Ocean. The Ambassador emphasized how difficult it is to quantify the specific results of Japan's contribution and highlighted the critical role that Japan has played thus far. He said he would underscore Japan's important role in OEF in his speech at the National Press Club on October 19.

Iran

¶10. (C) Japan would like to be included in multilateral talks on Iran, Yachi stressed, noting that Japan had not been invited to the September 19 meeting in New York. Japan does not want to be put in a position where multilateral forums on Iran arrive at decisions without Japan's participation and then "send the bill to Japan," he stated. Nonetheless, Japan will continue to consult with the United States and the EU-3 on Iran issues. The Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) will not provide government guarantees, insurance, or credit to Japanese companies exploring in the Azadegan field. This means the project will likely not go forward, Yachi said. Iran is growing frustrated because even though Iran

has made concessions, Japanese companies will not sign contracts with it because of the lack of GOJ guarantees. Iran is prepared to negotiate until September 27 and threatens to abandon the contracts if agreement is not reached by then.

Rice Flour

¶11. (C) The Ambassador explained that the Ministry of Health and Welfare is holding up hundreds of millions of dollars of U.S. processed food shipments because they may contain trace amounts of genetically modified rice flour. He noted that USTR is very concerned that this could become a serious problem, adding that Washington is nervous about requirements to test processed food for rice flour because there is no quick test to check for it and such a test would be very expensive. Yachi and Director General Kawai said they were not aware of this issue and promised to look into the matter.

SCHIEFFER